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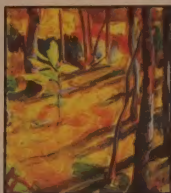
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DO WE REALLY NEED THE ARTS?

As local artist Gail Echlin devotes herself to paint, SEE's Marliiss Weber considers the value of the arts in Alberta.

COVER PAINTING FROM GAIL ECHLIN'S UPCOMING SHOW

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feature DELICATE PRUNING OR A HATCHET JOB?

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opinion SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL IS BLIND

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NEWS BRIEFS

NEWS • STUFF YOU MIGHT HAVE MISSED
OFF THE ROAD DRIVING

Here's some good news from the recession front. Declining sales brought on by the U.S. economic collapse has been the kiss of death to the Hummer, the wretched symbol of excess. General Motors has announced that it will phase out production of the world's ugliest, least fuel efficient worst status symbol unless a buyer can be found. In its peak year, 2006, GM sold 71,524 of the militaristic beasts; in 2009, that total fell to slightly more than 9,000. In January of this year, only 265 were sold.

NO RHUBARB OVER RHUBARB

What does forced Yorkshire rhubarb have in common with champagne? They are both on the list of the European Union's protected foods.

Forced Yorkshire rhubarb is grown indoors, can take up to three years to grow, and is harvested by candlelight to preserve its sweet flavour. Making the protected food list mean no producers of rhubarb grown outside the West Yorkshire triangle will be allowed to call their product forced Yorkshire rhubarb. Other products on the EU's list include champagne, Cornish pasties, Melton Mowbray pork pies, and Newcastle Brown Ale.

10 BILLION SERVED

A 71-year-old Johnny Cash fan got an unexpected call last week from Apple co-founder Steve Jobs.

Louie Sulzer (il Woodstock, Ga., got the call from the reclusive Apple genius after he downloaded a 1958 Johnny Cash song, *Guess Things Happen That Way*. Sulzer was given an iPod Nano by his children last October, and has purchased about 100 songs from the Apple site. Turns out his Cash purchase was the 10 billionth downloaded from the Apple site, and for this purchase Sulzer got a surprise call from Jobs... and \$10,000 worth of Apple credit.

TOP OF THE POPE

The Vatican's official newspaper, *L'Osservatore Romano*, has come out with its "semi-serious" list of the 10 albums that would be the perfect listening material for anyone who found themselves marooned on a desert island — although not in church. The paper listed *Thriller* by Michael Jackson, Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*, and the Beatles' *Revolver* among its favourites. Also earning blessings from the Vatican: *Greenland* by Paul Simon, *Rumours* by Fleetwood Mac, *Acting Baby* by U2, *(What's the Story) Morning Glory* by Oasis, and *Nightfly* by Donald Fagen.

ADVERTISING REALLY PAYS

A study in the journal *Psychology & Marketing* has found that children between the ages of three and five show an ability to use ads to decide which products they feel will be the most "fun." The kids, the study found, understood what the brand was and how they could use it in their daily lives. Researchers showed children logos for 50 brands, and asked the kids if they had seen the brand and what product they made. The most recognized brand was, no surprise here, McDonald's, at 89 per cent.

—By Maurice Tougas

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NEWS • ARTS FUNDING

Delicate Pruning OR A Hatchet Job?

ARTS FUNDING TAKES A HIT FROM THE GOVERNMENT, BUT NOBODY KNOWS WHERE THE PAIN WILL COME

BY MAURICE TOUGAS

The budget axe fell on 14 government departments last month, and arts and culture spending was not spared.

In fact, on a percentage basis, the ministry of culture took one of the biggest hits — a 15-per-cent reduction in funding for the entire department, which includes funding for arts and culture, community groups, and preserving Alberta's historic resources.

The Alberta Foundation for the Arts, the Crown agency that provides grant funding to artists, art organizations and cultural industries, took a 16-per-cent budget cut, from \$34.8 million to \$29.2 million. Funding for film and television production is also being cut from \$20 million to \$17 million.

The budget estimate for arts is set at \$56 million in 2010-11, rising to \$59 million in 2011-12 and \$61 million in 2012-13 — which would still be \$5 million less than the \$66 million spent this year, and about \$14 million less than the budget for 2008-09.

How much will the cutbacks hurt art and culture in Alberta? According to the government, not much at all. According to the opposition, plenty. And for the creative types who actually need the money, it's just another day in Alberta.

Culture and Community Spirit Minister Lindsay Blackett defended his ministry's budget decisions in an interview with SEE.

"Last year we didn't touch arts and culture funding," Blackett said of the previous year's budget, which saw substantial cuts to other areas under the culture and community spirit umbrella. He believes he's found the "easiest, least punitive" way to reduce spending by "spreading it across the table."

Blackett, who has been meeting with arts and culture groups for the past 18 months in different parts of the province, says the savings can be found through leaner administration and judicious pruning.

"Ten to 15 per cent of our programs are inefficient," he said. "There is fat in them."

Blackett said economies can be found in streamlining the 36 different grants currently

available. He promises there will be "minimal impact" on artists, but there will be changes.

"We're looking at people who got grants that maybe shouldn't," he says. Without naming names, Blackett says there are groups that "maybe aren't relevant, but because they put their hands out, they got grants."

Despite the cuts, Blackett says his government is still committed to arts and culture.

"We know how important you are, and we really believe it. But we're stuck."

But Edmonton Centre Alberta Liberal MLA Laurie Blackman isn't buying it.

Blackman says the budget "takes us back 10 years."

"I'm disappointed," Blackman says of Blackett. "For someone who appeared to show an appreciation and understanding of the arts, he hasn't been a great champion for us."

The cuts will be painful to the arts community, Blackman says, resulting in fewer productions, a loss of jobs for actors and not enough money to bring in art shows from outside of Alberta.

As for who's going to bear the brunt of the cuts, Blackman doesn't know — and she says the government doesn't know either.

"I'm beginning to believe that they do not, in fact, budget anymore."

Blackett says the government just "picks a number" and figures it out later.

But something the minister said gives Blackman concern for smaller groups.

"The minister said the larger organizations won't be harmed, which means double trouble further down the line."

Blackett says the government has got to "start seeing itself as a sophisticated investor in the arts, but they just don't get it."

While the Tories are under constant attack to cut their spending, Blackman says reducing funding to the arts doesn't make economic sense.

"It's not a frill. The ancillary dollars that are generated by investment in the arts is significant, varying from between \$3 and \$7 per dollar invested."



ILLUSTRATION BY DYSON ELEGANT/CHILLER

"The arts and film are a good investment."

Wildrose Alliance leader Danielle Smith says that despite her party's right-wing, budget cutting rep, the party is still supportive of the arts — but with a different funding model.

Smith says her party believes substantial arts funding could come from private donations if a more generous tax incentive program was in place.

She says if there was a tax credit system in place as generous as the one for donations to political parties — for example, getting a \$75 tax credit for a \$100 donation to an arts or cultural organization — that would encourage a lot more private giving.

"This would help to fill the gap when the government has to make these decisions to reduce funding," Smith said in an interview. "They need to make it up somewhere."

Wildrose members, Smith says, believe that broad-based tax credits would allow individuals to have the "freedom to support the things they believe in."

Smith says her party members "believe that having arts and cultural programs are an important part of creating livable communities."

Smith is careful to use the term "community projects" when referring to arts funding.

"Do we really need to be providing support to Cirque du Soleil, or concerts for non-local bands? It should be fairly obvious that they want to see home grown arts and culture projects supported, and not necessarily large grants for other types of non-local projects."

For some in the arts community, the cuts are just a fact of life in Alberta. Not that they're happy about it. According to actor Andrew McCready: "People come to Alberta to make money. Period. As such, they don't care about the province's history, or culture."

"They don't care about the city they live in as long as their street is cleared of snow, the potholes are fixed and they don't raise taxes. And they certainly don't want their hard earned money being wasted on a bunch of faggy elitist artists who should get a real job like everybody else."

"With that kind of attitude, is it any wonder the arts, education, and social programs get shafted all the time?"

Charlene Roche, a theatre technician and manager says it is "amazing after all these centuries that some people still can't realize the value in artistic expression in society."

"Besides, if it was really lacking in value, wouldn't it have run its course centuries ago?" Edmonton bookseller Laurie Greenwood believes the cuts will be "felt very deeply in many areas."

"If we want Alberta culture to include authors, publishers, filmmakers, musicians, dancers, graphic artists, the theatre, etc. it must be funded by the government," Greenwood says.

Perhaps filmmaker Chester Sit puts it best for the arts community: "If arts funding disappears, I'll have no choice but to move. It's that simple."

— With files from Marissa Weber

—Lawyer Robert White, questioning the motives of wildlife officials for taping bitumen covered ducks, at Syncrude's trial in the deaths of 1,600 birds. The Canadian Press, March 3.

NO NEW MLAS NEEDED, THANK YOU

Alberta needs more politicians the way the United States needs more lawyers.

Last week, the committee charged with redrawing Alberta's political map came up with its interim report, and, as ordered by the province, the report found a way to squeeze four seats into the Alberta legislature. Edmonton, the report concludes, should get one more seat, bringing the total to 19 (or, put another way, simply restoring the seat Edmonton lost the last time we went through this redistricting exercise). Calgary deserves two more, the report says, to bring its total to 25 and booming Fort McMurray would be divided into two ridings. Fort McMurray-Conklin and Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

The real question Albertans should be asking themselves is not how many seats Edmonton gets as opposed to Calgary, or why rural MLAs represent so few constituents compared to urban MLAs, but whether we really need to add to the 83-seat legislature at all.

The answer, quite clearly, is no. Alberta's legislature is already one of the

most bloated in the country. Consider the numbers.

Adding four more members to the august chamber will give Alberta an average of one MLA for every 40,880 people. Quebec has one member of its national assembly for every 60,000 people. B.C. has one for every 52,000, while Ontario has one member of the provincial parliament for every 122,600.

And MLAs don't come cheap. Adding just four MLAs is estimated to cost another \$10 million a year in salaries, staff, office space, and linchpins with the MLAs' names written on them.

What Alberta needs is not four new MLAs, but better MLAs. We need government MLAs who will do more than just sit quietly on the back bench and nod agreement with the government. We need MLAs who will respond to concerns from the public. And we need MLAs who enter politics not for the paycheck and the ego gratification that comes with being a big shot politician, but because they want to serve the public.

And more than anything else, we need an electorate that cares.

WORTH IT FOR THE MEMORIES

Sure the Olympics cost a ridiculous amount of money. And yes, the billions lavished on the just concluded display of athleticism and jingoism could have been spent on housing, or education, or health care, or whatever. But if there were no Vancouver Olympics, we wouldn't have experienced the joy of Alexander Bloddeus's first gold on Canadian soil, nor would we have been touched by the bond between Alexandre and his brother Frederic, who has cerebral palsy. We would not have revelled in the craziness of Jon Montgomery on the skeleton. We would not

have marvelled at the ageless Clara Hughes, a speed skating bronze medalist at age 37. We would not have fallen for the sweet-as-maple-syrup pair of ice dancing gold medalists Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir. We would not have felt the heartache and wept at the courage of Joannie Rochette, a bronze medalist despite losing her mother days before she skated. And we would not have risen as one nation to celebrate double gold in the game we invented and hold dearest.

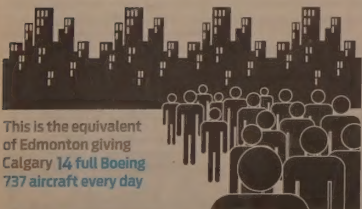
Was it worth it? Yeah, it sure was.

BY THE NUMBERS • THE CALGARY HABIT

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This is the equivalent of Edmonton giving Calgary 14 full Boeing 737 aircraft every day



POINT OF VIEW • ISRAEL

Support For Israel Is Blind



MY TOWN SCOTT LINGLEY
**HYSTERIA OVER ISRAELI
APARTHEID WEEK DEDUCTS
FROM IMPORTANT MESSAGE**

Ali Abunimah, the Palestinian-American journalist and activist who kicked off this week's Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) activities at the U of A, prefaced his presentation with a few disclaimers, as it is incumbent on anyone with an opinion to do when it comes to this issue. We need to vocalize our condemnation of racism and anti-Semitism right out of the gate, so that we can stop talking about the inherent ugliness of the phrase "Israeli apartheid" and start talking about what it means.

The entire Ontario legislature took time out from its busy schedule to unanimously denounce what they considered the inflammatory IAW activities around the province. Conservative MPP Peter Sturman decried the name as "hateful" and "odious." And Sherwood Park Con-

servative MP Tim Uppal has taken it upon himself to introduce a similar motion in Parliament when it fires up again, doubtless to similar unanimous acclaim. Harper's unconditional support of the Israeli government is well known. Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff has already gone live with his public deploring and, well, who really wants to get on the wrong side of this issue politically — especially when doing so might open you to accusations of anti-Semitism? If that sounds paranoid, just check out the hysterical hodgepodge of the *National Post*, which refers to the work of supporting Palestinian rights as the province of "anti-Semites," "self-hating Jews" and "a few left-wing rabbits."

And so Abunimah articulated his absolute rejection of racism and anti-Semitism and took to task critics who suggest that Israeli Apartheid Week's campus-based activities somehow subject Jewish university students to ostracism or peril. Abunimah was quick to note that not all Jewish students, least of all those involved in mounting IAW events around the world, necessarily endorse the historically brutal, expansionist aspirations of the Israeli government.

"Let no one slander us that we came here to threaten or make any-

one feel unsafe," Abunimah said, and it seemed kind of weird that he had to before a respectful, multiracial audience of citizens. When one of those citizens suggested that Arabs are also Semitic peoples and that the oppression of Palestinians is therefore also "anti-Semitic," Abunimah responded that the term's power for connoting anti-Jewish racism should be reserved for identifying and condemning that form of racism, which is still very real and, indeed, increasingly prevalent in Europe.

Abunimah then noted that our nation might be Israel's most staunch supporter internationally these days. Canada, for instance, was the only country to vote against a UN resolution calling for an end to the "massive human rights violations" during its attack on the captive population of Gaza over Christmas 2008 that killed more than 1,300 Palestinians — mostly civilians — and destroyed even more of its heavily tattered infrastructure, including homes and hospitals. According to the journalist, the Conservative commitment to Israel has included refusing funding to organizations that provide humanitarian relief in occupied Palestine, citing, by way of example, Canada's recent decision to revoke \$10 million

LINGLEY cont'd on p. 7

Picking The Oscars A Game Anyone Can Play



WAY OUTSIDE POLITICS MAURICE TOUGAS
AND NOW FOR SOMETHING
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT —
ACADEMY AWARD PREDICTIONS

I kinda hate to admit this, being a grown adult male and all, but I really like the Academy Awards.

I know I shouldn't. It's mostly showbiz at its worst, with every body getting veeey and thankful to Jesus and their agent and publicist, pretending they're surprised to win when everybody KNEW they were going to win. I profoundly hate the red carpet ceremonies where fawning, no talent celebrity snobs gush over every star and ask "Who are you wearing?" Just once, I'd like to hear someone say "It's something a designer paid me to wear."

So, yeah, I know it's pretty terrible. But I'm a sucker for showbiz sap, and nothing else serves it up quite like the Oscars.

Better than the Oscars themselves

is the guessing game. Anyone can be an expert in picking Oscar winners, even if you haven't been to a movie since Eddie Murphy actually made comedies that were funny. I love movies, but I rarely venture into an actual movie theatres. So I'm mostly a video guy, which means I haven't seen many of the movies up for Oscars, but that won't stop me from making the following predictions.

In this year's best picture category, there are 10 entries, double the usual number. But that won't stop me from picking the winner, but with half the nominees basically filler with no

clous: based on the Novel 'Push' by Sapphire sounds like too much of a downer, and is also saddled with an official title that sounds like it was written by a team of entertainment lawyers. I haven't seen *Avatar* yet, because at two hours and 42 minutes, it violates my No. 1 rule of moviegoing: don't go to any movie that is likely to cause your butt to fall asleep. I have seen *The Hurt Locker* — very good, but overrated, I think — and *Up in the Air*, which I loved. The consensus seems to be a battle between *Avatar* and its billion dollar box office, and *The Hurt Locker*, which has

and Bridges is a much loved, much lauded actor (or so I'm told) who has never won an Oscar. The other desert is the supporting actress category, which will be won by Mo'Nique No Last Name in *Precious*, etc. The Academy loves bad guys.

Speaking of which, Christoph Waltz is another near-sure bet for *Inglorious Basterds*. He plays a charming, multi-lingual Nazi, which is a pretty cool combination. (The worst nomination of any category is that of Matt Damon for *Invictus*. I've seen this film, and I can only guess he was given a nomination for getting

pearance. Also cross off Carey Mulligan, because nobody's heard of her, or her movie. Helen Mirren is only on the list because of an Academy requirement that a British actress must receive at least one of the nomination spots, which alternates between Kate Winslet, Cate Blanchette, Judy Dench, or Mirren. So it comes down to Sandra Bullock in *The Blind Side* and Meryl Streep for *Julie & Julia*.

This is Streep's 13th nomination, and although you might think she has a closet full of Oscars by now, in fact she has just one win, and that goes back to 1982's *Sophie's Choice*. So, she's due for another. But Sandra Bullock has never been nominated despite being a consistent box office star since *Speed* in 1992. The Academy likes giving Oscars to so-called light actresses who do a credible dramatic turn (Reese Witherspoon, Julia Roberts, Cher, Sally Field). Both Bullock and Streep are money in the box office of late, so that's almost a wash. But I'm going with Bullock. Her movie is lame, but it's the closest she's come to actual acting. And beside, there's always next year for Streep.

So there you have it. No need to watch the show on Sunday ... but you will. You will.

I'M ASHAMED TO ADMIT IT, BUT I'M A SUCKER FOR SHOWBIZ SAP, AND NOTHING ELSE SERVES IT UP QUITE LIKE THE OSCARS.

chance of winning, it's no harder to pick than any other year.

You can safely eliminate *District 9*, *An Education*, *A Serious Man*, *Up*, and *The Blind Side*. (I've seen *The Blind Side*, and how this soggy piece of feel goodery won a nomination is beyond me.) As for the others, *Inglorious Basterds* has an outside chance, but the critical reception was somewhat mixed, and personally, I would never endorse a film that encourages bad spelling. Pre-

probably been seen by fewer people in its entire run than went to see *Avatar* on its opening day. My guess is that the winner will be *The Hurt Locker*, because nobody wants James Cameron to make another "king of the world" acceptance speech.

The acting categories generally have two or three lead-pipe cinches, and this year is no different.

Jeff Bridges is a guaranteed winner for *Crazy Heart*, because it's a great performance (or so I'm told),

bullied up and speaking with an accent. The second worst nomination was *Morgan Freeman* for playing Nelson Mandela in the same film. Freeman spoke ... so ... slowly I wanted to ... pull ... the words ... out of ... his throat ...

The only really interesting category this year is best actress.

You can eliminate Gabourey Sidibe for *Precious*, because you just can't give an Oscar to someone making their first and possibly only film ap-

LINGLEY (cont'd from p. 6)

of funding to the United Nations relief efforts in Gaza.

Abunimah did not, however, recite the litany of human rights offences and systemic deprivations perpetrated by the Israeli government, which are very well documented, nor did he dwell on the fact that Israel's activities in the occupied territories have long contravened international treaties and international law, which puts Israeli politicians at risk of being arrested for war crimes when they travel abroad.

Rather, Abunimah was there to endorse the notion that a shared Israeli-Palestinian state is possible and that this backlash against Israeli Apartheid Week is proof that the movement to oppose Israel's oppression of Palestine is gaining momentum internationally, particularly the movement of boycotting, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it extends equal treatment and equal rights to all its citizens. It was here that he made an explicit link between South Africa's oppression of its indigenous population during the 1980s and the current situation in Palestine.

"The balance of power in South Africa never changed," he said. "What did change was the [government's] complete loss of moral legitimacy in relying on oppression and violence to maintain control. BDS created the momentum for change."

As for the politicians and pundits

who rail against the alleged transgression of, in the National Post's phrase, "rhetorical boundaries" in discussing Israel's treatment of Palestinians, Abunimah said their fixation on semantics — as opposed to justice and equality — will age poorly.

"There will come a time when the people who passed these resolutions [condemning IAW] will claim they did not do so," he said in closing. "They will say they were always against Israeli apartheid."

Most people in attendance at Monday's presentation seemed in agreement with Abunimah's thesis but it would be a missed opportunity if only sympathetic audiences turned out to this week's events. Real dialogue, rather than knee-jerk demonizing, is necessary to ending what is objectively a humanitarian disaster, whatever else you choose to call it.

So by all means, if you reject the analogy of present-day Israel with apartheid-era South Africa, show up address your objections to the organizers and attendees of Israeli Apartheid Week in the spirit of respect and tolerance they have taken pains to emphasize at their events. Then probe your conscience and decide for yourself which is the greater outrage: the "inflammatory" name of a public awareness campaign, or the real-world inequality and suffering it denotes.

To find out more about Edmonton Israeli Apartheid Week, visit edmonton.apartheidweek.org.

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CITY WOMEN REACH OUT TO HELP WOMEN A WORLD AWAY

BY ANDREW PAUL

According to UNICEF, up to 10,000 Nepalese females as young as six years old are kidnapped and trafficked into India's booming sex trade every year.

During an occupational therapy placement at a spinal cord injury and leprosy hospital in Nepal in 2008, Christina Kapusta met a few of the women who had been rescued from the Indian brothels. After hearing their tragic stories, Kapusta returned to Edmonton, and started Necklaces for Nepal with her friend Lauren Legatt.

"Christina was the pioneer who went there in the first place," Legatt says. "It was one of those things where you can't just hear about something like that and not do something like it." Necklaces for Nepal purchases jewelry made by rescued women staying at Princess Home, a rehabilitation centre for trafficked women in Katmandu, Nepal.

The jewelry ranges in price from \$20-\$40 and all proceeds go to Princess Home and Green Pastures Hospital, where Kapusta completed her placement after graduating from the University of Alberta with a degree in occupational therapy in 2008.



Christina Kapusta (left) and Lauren Legatt with Necklaces for Nepal | PHOTO BY CHRIS HANSEN

Since starting Necklaces for Nepal nine months ago, Kapusta and Legatt have raised close to \$10,000 for the home.

Tiny Hands International, a non-denominational ministry that focuses on helping street children and women affected by the human traf-

ficking industry, founded Princess Home in 2006.

"They're raped up to 40 times a day when they start out," explains Doug Dworak, a spokesperson with Tiny Hands International. "They get beaten if they refuse, or if the client is not satisfied. When they have their

children sometimes the children are drugged, and put under the bed where the woman performs her acts. These children are basically enslaved into the brothel and they come up into the brothel and become prostitutes themselves."

Most of the women are taken from rural Nepal with promises of employment in India. Parents agree to part with their daughters in hopes that their children will return with money from the newfound job to help offset the crippling poverty experienced by most Nepalese families.

However, most of them will never see their children again. The girls are sold to brothels across India for less than \$1,000. Once under the brothels control they are often locked in cages and peddled to johns for as little as \$2 every time they are raped.

To put this in perspective, Dworak says that the Indian sex trade is a multi-billion dollar industry threatening to surpass the drugs as the top black market commodity.

Once the girls contract diseases such as HIV and AIDS they are no longer useful to the brothels and are kicked into the streets with nothing more than the clothes on their back. Since May 2009, the IS border monitoring stations operated by Tiny Hands International has intercepted, and saved about 1,000 girls from a

life of rape and abuse in brothels. The organization then returns them to their villages, and spreads awareness of the trafficking scheme to the parents of the village who are often ignorant to the situation, says Dworak.

However, not all women can be intercepted, and the fortunate few who are rescued from the brothel cages are taken to Princess Home where they are taught how to lead an independent life.

Dworak says that it is operations like Necklaces for Nepal that make the ministry's work possible.

"I hate putting it in terms of dollars, but it helps people see it a bit easier," Dworak says. "Every girl we intercept and preserve from a life in a brothel costs us \$20. So for every \$20 of jewelry they sell will preserve one life."

Currently, Kapusta and Legatt are applying for non-profit status for their burgeoning organization. However, while they slash through the miles of red tape they rely on word of mouth to spread the word.

"Our ultimate goal for me and Christina would be to do this full-time," Legatt says. For now, anyone interested in learning more or purchasing jewelry can contact Necklaces for Nepal at necklacesfornepal@gmail.com.

POINT OF VIEW • HEALTH

When Food Poisoning Hits, Reach For Charcoal



HOLISTIC HEALTH 101 ROBERTA SHEPHERD
WHEN FOOD POISONING STRIKES, THERE ARE NATURAL WAYS TO GET OVER IT

Two weeks ago, my parents and I contracted food poisoning after what was supposed to be a nice dinner out to celebrate my son's birthday. Since then, I've heard from numerous people who have had the same ill-fated experience. There seems to be some undesirable microorganisms lurking in Edmonton restaurants' salads and entrees. A recent phone call from a friend seeking advice in the midst of his clash with food poisoning has inspired me to offer my suggestions here.

Food poisoning happens when there are bacteria, viruses, parasites or toxic materials such as pesticides on the food that we eat. Viruses and bacteria are the most common

causes of food poisoning. Usually the presence of contaminants is as a result of food being prepared poorly, in unsanitary areas and by unsanitary people. It's astounding to consider that one of the most common culprits of food poisoning is fecal contamination. Ignorance was definitely built before I repeatedly came across that information.

Many cases of food poisoning are apparent within hours, while others have an incubation period in which the pathogens (disease forming agents) multiply in the body. Because of the incubation period, countless cases of food poisoning are mistaken for the stomach flu. Symptoms of food poisoning include: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal cramps, fever, chills, headache, muscular weakness, joint pain and dizziness. Typically, food poisoning lasts anywhere from six to 48 hours, depending on what type of pathogen is the culprit. Severe cases of food poisoning can cause permanent dysfunctions such as neurological disturbances, immune deficiency or arthritis. Most tragic are cases of food poisoning that result in death. Those with compromised immune

systems, the elderly, pregnant women and infants are more susceptible to the graver consequences of food poisoning.

Food poisoning happens so frequently that it's alarming, especially considering how many cases are preventable. Basic prevention tips include storing food at the right temperature, not eating food that's

viral and anti-bacterial in nature if you still manage to get food poisoning, here's what to do.

Take five charcoal tablets upon the onset of food poisoning and again six hours later. Charcoal tablets are available at most health food stores and absorb toxic materials from the bloodstream and digestive system. Take charcoal away from any other

foods and minerals that have been lost via vomiting and diarrhea. Slow ingestion of broths and bland starches are helpful. I also recommend Emergen-C brand powdered vitamin C supplements that come in individual packets and a variety of flavours. They are available at most health food stores.

Taking probiotics such as acidophilus will help replenish healthy intestinal bacteria that may have been lost in cases of diarrhea.

If you are a person with a compromised system, your symptoms persist for more than two days, you have a high fever or are displaying symptoms such as slurred speech, difficulty breathing or swallowing, abdominal swelling, bloody vomit or bowel movements or swollen joints, please seek immediate medical assistance. If a child under three displays symptoms of food poisoning, it is equally important to seek medical help.

I hope that these tips will be helpful to you or anyone you know who may contract food poisoning. I am more hopeful though that you will not have to use any of these tips at all!

FOOD POISONING HAPPENS SO FREQUENTLY THAT IT'S ALARMING, CONSIDERING HOW MANY CASES ARE PREVENTABLE

overdue, cooking foods properly (especially meats), washing hands often, using separate cutting boards for meat and vegetables, using clean utensils, being wary of broken or cracked containers and being careful at outdoor events where food can be left out too long in the sun. Choosing to eat at restaurants means relinquishing control of how your food is handled and prepared. Taking garlic before going to eat at restaurants can help your body be prepared to attack in the instance of any invading pathogens. Garlic is a reputed immune booster as well as being anti-

medications as it affects abortion.

Take two caplets of goldenseal herb upon the onset of food poisoning and repeat every 3-4 hours until symptoms subside. Goldenseal is a powerful herb capable of killing viruses and bacteria. Nature's Way is a good brand, also available at most health food stores. Goldenseal should not be taken over prolonged periods of time or by pregnant women.

Drink small sips of water as much as you can through the duration of your plight.

After your symptoms have subsided, replenish electrolytes, nutri-

Blue Chair Is Oh, So Comfy



LONG OVERDUE VISIT TO THE DELIGHTFUL BLUE CHAIR WON'T BE THE LAST FOR OUR REVIEWER

BLUE CHAIR CAFE
9514 76 Ave. 780-989-2801

By **SCOTT LINGLEY**

By much to my discredit, it took no less a personage than Alvin Youngblood Hart, last week's See cover model, to finally get me out to the Blue Chair Cafe. Tucked, like so many of Edmonton's hidden resto-gems, in a very unassuming strip mall, the Blue Chair has spent most of its give-or-take five-year tenure on 76th Avenue

chose from. An e-mail to the restaurant – which isn't open Monday or Tuesday and keeps brunch hours on Sunday – prompted a return phone call whereby two seats of unspecified colour were booked. It was that easy.

Come Saturday night we found ourselves among the healthy roomful of music fans who'd had the same notion as us, wringing out the cafe's beer and wine supplies as they soaked in for the night's feast and entertainment.

The staff of black and denim-clad servers worked the busy room like pros all night, and the attention started as soon as we were seated with a helpful overview of the dinner menu and a brief discussion of wine. Our orders were taken promptly and we were left to enjoy the ambience and a quite reasonably priced (by resto standards) malbec.

The ordering had been by no means easy. Given the choice of

a subtle roasted crunch.

My co-diner's rib eye steak with a florette of garlic caper butter turning into a translucent glaze over its grilled surface looked lovely, but I knew when I looked into the dark pool of mole sauce layered over grilled chicken thighs and fragrant basmati slike that I had chosen wisely. Good mole notoriously requires chilies, cocoa, myriad spices and long hours of continuous cooking to achieve its impenetrably rich complexity, and Blue Chair's version had that in spades, not to mention a tantalizing but tempered spiciness. The colourful confetti of diced peppers, onions and tomatoes that is pico de gallo – literally, "the rooster's beak" – scattered over stewed black beans was the perfect complement to the intense mole and the juicy, lightly crisped chicken. A bite-for-bite swap with the co-diner confirmed the rib eye was as expertly turned and delicious as it looked.

**THE TAB: \$70 FOR TWO, FOOD ONLY
THE GIST: ENJOY THE FOOD, LISTEN TO THE MUSIC
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building its rep as an intimate music venue where patrons are enjoined to enjoy the food and listen to the music. Meaning: save your boozey chat for between sets, Edmontonians.

Anyhow, the Blue Chair has recently undergone renovations which, as I understand it, have improved both capacity and signlines for live music events. The appearance of Mr. Youngblood Hart, a Tennessee-based blues artist whose proclivity for rocking out with a band has somewhat eclipsed his early rep as an unusually nimble and soulful interpreter of traditional acoustic blues. A solo appearance would seem to hearken back to his breakthrough albums and, indeed, Mr. Hart's repertoire drew from the same hutch as when he appeared in Edmonton in the late 1990s. All to the good, as far as I was concerned, since his first disc, *Big Mama's Door*, should be in every blues lover's collection, and is not a bad album to own in any case.

The decision to make a night of it and take advantage of Blue Chair's prix-fixe special show dinner wasn't one we had to think much about – \$35 per person for a four-course meal, with five main courses to

salmon aioli, rib eye steak, chicken mole, vegetarian gnocchi and goat curry my tastebuds nearly drowned, but I finally settled on chicken mole. I silently hoped my co-diner would be curious about their "signature" goat curry with roti, but she wanted her meat a little bloodier and ordered the rib eye with roast potatoes and vegetables. We were both entitled to soup, salad and dessert in the bargain.

Soup for me was a vegetarian carrot-ginger coconut soup crisscrossed with ribbons of fresh herbs. Too many experiences with heartburn-flavoured GINGER carrot soup have all but put me off the concept, but this particular puree had a perfect balance of its flavours and a velvety texture enhanced by the creamy coconut. The other soup, beef barley, was also skillfully made, well stocked with fall-apart cubes of beef and an almost subliminal hint of wine cream, made me think of stroganoff. Very nice.

Salad was a shirpy nest of chilled vermicelli in light, faintly sweet Asian vinaigrette on fresh spinach with cucumber matchsticks and what might have been goji berries. Black sesame, sunflower and pumpkin seeds added

Our server, who seemed to crop up at just the right moment all night, came by to see if we'd like dessert right away or later. We quite liked the tastes in our mouths just then, so we opted to eat our grapefruit sorbet between sets. Like everything else about the night, the sweet, tart citrus sorbet seemed just right, with an artfulness about it that demanded careful savouring. You know, I just might go back.

To find out about Blue Chair's regular menu and musical calendar, visit bluechair.ca.

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MAPLE

EXPRESSIONISM • ARTIST PROFILE

Gail Echlin's Changing Landscape

LOCAL LANDSCAPE ARTIST, GAIL ECHLIN, HAS TAKEN THE LEAP FROM THE SAFETY OF 9-TO-5, AND HAS FOUND A WHOLE NEW WORLD OF ART

THE COLOURS WITHIN

Proffitts Public Art Gallery, St. Albert
March 8-May 1

BY ANDREW PAUL

The view from Gail Echlin's eighth-floor apartment/studio is beautiful.

From the south side of the North Saskatchewan River, the combination of Edmonton's winding river valley and sprawling downtown skyline is breathtaking. It's no surprise that the focus of this local painter's first major exhibit is landscapes inspired by our city's greenbelt.

Presented by the Profiles Public Art Gallery in St. Albert, *The Colours Within* exhibit will feature landscapes from four local painters from March 8 to May 1 – including 10 works by Echlin.

"It's a pleasure, a joy to have the input of everything out there when you're painting," Echlin says. "You see it, you feel it, you smell it, taste it almost. It's a magical sort of thing."

It was two years ago that Echlin began packing her trusty blue satchel with paint, brushes, easel and water dishes to visit a special spot she found just down the hill from Saskatchewan Drive and 99th Street.

During the two years, she visited her grove of inspiration she has witnessed the rejuvenation and perpetual change of the river valley, and says it's not unlike her own life and experience pursuing art as a viable career.

But wait a minute. *The Colours Within* is her first major exhibit. That can hardly be called a long career for a paid artist, can it?

Well, yes and no. Echlin explains that along the twisting road to success an artist will often work jobs that use their talents in ways they don't expect.

Echlin was born in Vancouver, but didn't stay long as her family moved to the United States where she discovered her love and knack for the arts.

Initially she enrolled in a graphic arts school in Seattle hoping to pursue a career in graphic design, but the temptation of sunnier climates was too much to resist, and she dropped out to head south.

"It was at the California Institute for the Arts that I got into paint and expressionism," Echlin says.

It was the 1960s, and an exciting time to be an artist, especially for the 19-year-old Echlin who was living in the San Francisco Bay area during the most extraordinary cultural movement of the 20th century.

However, finishing an arts degree was not in her cards. In 1974, with a new daughter in her arms, Echlin decided to return to her home country and found her way to Banff, and eventually Calgary, a year later for a job with a sign company.

"It didn't pay a lot, and the art I did was pretty – well, I didn't paint signs, that's an art in itself, a skill. But I would do designs, logos, and cut out stencils for screen-printing, kiss-cut letters on vinyl, things like that," Echlin says.

The pay wasn't great, but then again who gets into the art world expecting to get rich? Echlin sure didn't, but her fortunes

were about to change, and in 1989 after applying for a position in the Edmonton Journal's art department she got the call of a lifetime.

"It was a dream job," she says.

For the next 20 years Echlin was living her dream – well as close to it as possible. Particularly in the early years before the computer came along. It was a demanding position keeping up with the high-pressure, fast-paced world of daily deadlines, where she would churn out 4-6 paintings a week.

That changed slightly with the introduction of the computer. But even if the technology seemed threatening at first, Echlin says the new machines helped too.

Like it or not, the daily grind at a newspaper inevitably means that work an artist does not like will run. "In a way, computers took some of the emotional pressure off, because doing a photo illustration wasn't the same as painting or drawing," Echlin says.

The technology removed the personal touch of an artist to some degree, Echlin says, though she understands that many people will disagree. But as the years rolled by she began to feel the call of the brush once again, and started saving up so she could take some time off from the daily grind to get back to her acrylic roots.

In 2008, her plan was kicked into high gear as the economy went nose-first into the toilet.

Along with several other senior staff at the paper, Echlin took a buyout that was too good to resist.

It was time to start on an exhibit, but it proved difficult to switch gears from the hustle and bustle of the newsroom.

Echlin spent the next six months trying to find her groove. It was a frustrating transition, she says, but she found her motiva-

tion one morning while scouting locations in the river valley.

"There is a big path that people use to bike and walk on, then there's a natural path, that is probably an animal trail," Echlin explains. "I'd go in a little bit, but there was always this one little skinny tree that I liked. I liked the shapes and angles, so I always kept that tree in my pieces."

Using acrylic on paper, a departure from her usual preference of canvas, because it makes the "colours pop," these pieces would eventually comprise the submissions to Profiles Public Art Gallery in spring 2009.

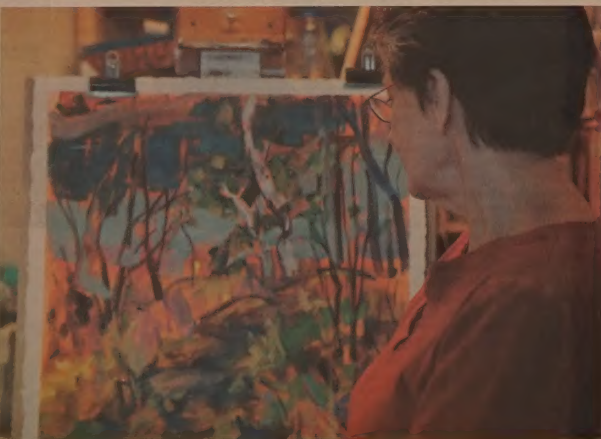
Working closely with Glenda Haughian and Janine Karasick-Acosta from the gallery, Echlin was invited to join three other artists for the landscapes exhibit.

"I hope they get excited about the woods and the forest," Echlin says about the people who will see her work. "I'll move out of the forest again, but I've seen how it can renew, because I've seen the same spot change over two years."

Like the forest, Echlin says artists must be able to renew and grow and change. Echlin is currently departing from the practice of landscape capture into a different vein, thanks largely in part to the birth of her first grandchild.

Echlin has taken photocopies of her granddaughter's ultrasounds and is painting them with a fairytale bent. A copy of *Puss in Boots* sits on a bookshelf in her apartment revealing an influence.

With a little luck Echlin says she hopes the project will turn into another exhibit to add to her résumé. "I'm not making a lot of money with art yet, but it's a process of becoming known," she says. "To get a track record and show that you're in it for the long run, because people like to buy art because they like it, and because they like to think it will appreciate, too."



Local artist Gail Echlin draws her inspiration from Edmonton's river valley. PHOTO BY CRAIG JANZEN

Do We Really Need The Arts? Without A Doubt



STEPPING OUT OF HER ARTS BUBBLE, SEE'S MARLISS WEBER CONSIDERS THE VALUE OF THE ARTS IN ALBERTA

BY MARLISS WEBER

IMHO (In My Humble Opinion) is a new column that raises significant arts issues and spurs discussion and debate. And we want to hear from you. Please let us know what you think by joining the conversation on www.seemagazine.com.

Ah, arts funding cuts in Alberta. They're like brown snow in winter, dog crap is to lawn, Stephen Harper is to Canada: irritating, unfortunate, and ubiquitous. So ubiquitous that it seems like Alberta artists have taken the latest news of a 15-per-cent cut in their stride, barely looking up as the provincial government gives them another firm kick to the ribs.

But let us consider for a moment a question that most of us, if we care about the arts, rarely want to consider: Do we really need arts funding? Do we really need the arts? To anyone who lives in an arts bubble, which I fully admit to, the answer seems ob-

viously, they already do. Any drive for innovation, any spark of creativity will be lost. Artists need to feel safe to take risks, to develop new forms, to push boundaries of established thought. This is the artist's role in society, and to force artists to do only that which they know they can sell is the death knell for creativity (further to this point, look at the state of Broadway theatre, and you'll know of what I speak — a Spiderman musical? Are you kidding me?).

Not that I have a problem with populist art. Just because a piece moves millions of people and makes kajillions of dollars doesn't mean it's less artistically-valid than a film, for instance, that seven people see. But that's another argument for another day. This argument comes down to how we define art, and whether it holds value in our society, value that should be reflected in a portion of our tax dollars and government spending. It's about the importance of that tiny theatre company or the toilet paper song. It's not about the perceived value of the art itself, as that is eminently subjective, and one man's masterpiece is another woman's trash, and everyone is entitled to an opinion about that.

But this argument is about the significance of art in itself, regardless of whether that art is a blockbuster movie or a Fringe play, or Celine Dion or Corb Lund. So let's exam-



Richard Lee performs during Nextfest 2009. PHOTO BY ANDREW PAUL

ine the importance of what the arts bring to our society, and the reasons why investment in the arts is fiscally smart and necessary.

or consume all of the above, we seriously limit the effectiveness of our communication abilities. We also limit our ability to persuade, to entertain, to connect with each other. Without the example of art (be it storytelling through words, music, film, theatre), we'd only experience the world through one small lens — our own eyes. But through these arts, we

can experience multiple lives, multiple worlds vicariously, which gives us a greater understanding of our world and our own place in it. And by communicating universal human experiences, we come to a greater understanding of others, leading to a healthy sense of compassion and empathy.

I could go on. Which is why it blows my mind that still we continue to under-value arts and artists in Alberta. You don't have to go to the tiny theatre company or love the toilet paper song to appreciate the importance of the arts, and yes, given the status of the economy, everybody needs to tighten belts in order to get back on track. But, in my humble opinion, the arts have such significant value to the future of our city, our province and our society, that I feel that it is short-sighted to take such a large bite out of a comparably small budget. And perhaps our government leaders need to join their philanthropist cousins (thank you, by the way, to the Pooles and the Winspares et al, just for being so gosh-darn nice) at the tiny theatre to find out what they're missing.

THIS ARGUMENT COMES DOWN TO HOW WE DEFINE ART, AND WHETHER IT HOLDS VALUE IN OUR SOCIETY. VALUE THAT SHOULD BE REFLECTED IN A PORTION OF OUR TAX DOLLARS AND GOVERNMENT SPENDING.

vious, and it's a loud, screaming, impassioned, "YES!!"

But, stepping out of the arts bubble, why, really, should the government pay money to support a tiny theatre company whose audience takes less than the rental cost of the hall? Or the visual artist who slaps three shades of grey on a canvas and calls it a masterpiece or the musician whose lyrics rhymed poetically the joys of soft toilet paper?

And sometimes I wonder, having seen all of these shows, and many others of their kind, whether art shouldn't have to follow the free market. Shouldn't art, as a sector of our economy, bend to the will of the people? Shouldn't art that people like and support flourish, and the art that people don't choose to support disappear into obscurity? Would it be hugely problematic for our society if our art followed a democratic, free market system?

I'll answer my own question by saying, yes, I think it would be hugely problematic, and this is why. The minute artists are forced to consider the populist will (any more so than

the importance of what the arts bring to our society, and the reasons why investment in the arts is fiscally smart and necessary).

1. The arts spur the economy Richard Florida, in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, illustrates how the creators of arts innovation are the new gatekeepers for fiscal vibrancy. According to Florida, a city that has a flourishing arts scene (and interestingly, a sizeable gay population) is more likely to embrace innovation in all sectors of the economy. His ideas harken back to the Renaissance, where cities like Florence and Rome were the centres of intellectual, scientific and artistic achievement. Creativity flows from one sector to the next, and innovation and openness to new ideas are the benchmarks of a thriving economy.

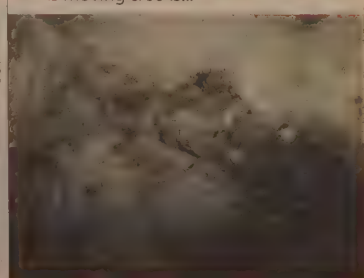
2. Community building When you consider the great cities of the world, Rome, Paris, London, New York, what do they have in common? Yes, they all have great public transit

out art — places like New York City (and our own city, I'd wager) you'd be left with nothing but loud, rude people smoking cigarettes and lots of smog. You'd still have a great transit system to take you from one end of the city to the other. But why would you leave your house?

3. Image building A society's art speaks to the values of the people it represents. The Roman Forum was built to impress and intimidate. Fifteen hundred years later the Sistine Chapel was built to express a society's obsession with religion. And now 500 years later the Art Gallery of Alberta (whether you love it or hate it) makes a powerful statement about innovation, creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit of Albertans. Art helps us to shape our identity, be it personal, regional or national, and powerful art can be a sign of just that: power, influence, visibility, credibility.

4. Communication Art allows us to express ourselves, which is an innate human desire. Without access to art, without the ability to write and draw and act and make music,

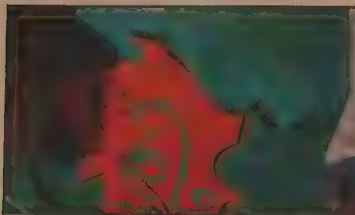
SNAP is moving & so is...



» LIZ INGRAM

SNAP is a vital and exciting community cultural organization, bringing together artists from the Edmonton area to work in a collaborative and inspiring environment. SNAP also brings outstanding exhibitions of print based works to the Edmonton community offering a wide variety of unique experiences from around the world. And... SNAP also hosts great social and cultural events including the best Christmas Party in Edmonton!!!

Student Art On Stony Plain



Colourful totems are like Prozac for Stony Plain Road. (PHOTO BY ANDREW PAUL)

MACEWAN STUDENTS ARE PROUD TO DISPLAY THEIR ART PROJECTS AND GIVE THE CITY STREET SOME COLOUR

BY ANDREW PAUL

The screech of the mitre saw's whirling blade as it rips through a piece of plywood makes the spine tingle as it spits dust into the already cloudy woodworking shop at MacEwan University's Centre for the Arts.

At first glance it's hard to tell that first-year fine arts student Hayley Davis has only been operating the machine for a few weeks. But that's the case for most of her classmates as they cut, glue and paint the wood on totems they are working on.

And thanks to these local arts students, the porn-littered stretch down Stony Plain Road is receiving a face-lift.

Thirty sculptures made by the fine arts students will be on display until March 22 in Butler Memorial Park, 1575 Stony Plain Rd., adding a splash of colour to the drab strip that is in the midst of revitalization efforts.

"I hope that people who drive by

or wait for buses in the cold or in the rain, instead of feeling gloomy they're going to have 30 lively, energetic, colourful, uplifting sculptures to look at," Agnieszka Matejko, a fine arts instructor from MacEwan, says. "I hope in a way they act as a Prozac sculpture, that's the whole point — to make this area come alive with colour."

Made entirely of wood, students were asked to draw inspiration from historic examples of totem culture including Buddhist stupas, Egyptian obelisks and menhirs, stone sculptures created in the European Neo-lithic period.

Of course, students were free to run with the ideas that struck them. Davis says, as her sculpture leans several pieces against a workbench. "It's almost a checkerboard theme," she says. "It's a rectangular prism going up with chunks cut out of them, and those are going to be checked, and I'm painting them all different colours to make it really spiffy."

Creating a public exhibit has many benefits for the budding sculptors. Matejko says it's teaching them how to create art with a social conscience.

Instead of remaining insular, creating work that may only strike a chord with themselves, the project is making them think about their audience.

However, the confidence boost from having their first public exhibit is pretty cool too Davis says with a grin.

"I did one painting to put in an auction to raise money for the Stollery, but that's kind of nothing really," she says. Having it out so anybody can see it is just fantastic. I'm so excited about it."

The idea for the project came about last summer after the city approached MacEwan looking for ways students could collaborate with the community surrounding the Centre for the Arts.

In the end the city donated \$500 in paint and agreed to supply, deliver and collect the sandbags needed to hold the sculpture up in the park.

So far, the totems have been received warmly by residents, and bus drivers in particular who stop near the park at the Jasper Place transfer station, Matejko says.

"When we put them up the bus drivers came out in a group from their buses and said, 'Wow you've really lived this up. This is such a boring place to stand, it's always so grey and so dull, and you've changed it completely around. Those are the people we're doing this for,' Matejko says.

The success of the project has inspired Matejko to look for ways to make community revitalization initiatives a regular feature in her classes, and says that she'll be discussing ideas with the city in the future.

"It's highly motivating for us to collaborate with the city and community," she says.

Everything's Here



20-something phenom, Justin Taylor, in *The Best Things Ever*. (PHOTO BY BILL HAYWARD)

THESE SHORT STORIES MAY OR MAY NOT BE THE BEST THING EVER, BUT THEY SPEAK WELL TO 20-SOMETHING ZEITGEIST

EVERYTHING HERE IS THE BEST THING EVER

By Justin Taylor, Harper Perennial, 200 pp, \$15.95

★★★★☆

BY MICHAEL HINGSTON

"Class of 2000 that's us," says a character in *Everything Here* is the *Best Thing Ever*, the debut collection of short fiction from Brooklyn's Justin Taylor. "They raised us to worship our own greatness, to believe ourselves touched by fortune. Destiny, whatever. They put their faith in the calendar's promise, that glistening

a man in too busy playing Nintendo and sulking over a spat with his girlfriend to wake her up in time to see the apocalypse happening outside their window, he prefers the oblivion of the backlit screen, which is rapidly filling up with its own "candy-coloured snow." Here and elsewhere, Taylor deftly captures the peculiar rhythms of the American vernacular, and while his prose is spare and sometimes evasive, it always carries with it vast hidden reserves of empathy.

"In My Heart I Am Already Gone" is the most dazzling piece of all. On the surface it's a story of a lonely 20-something who's enlisted by his uncle to discreetly drown the fam-

THE STORIES ARE LOADED WITH QUALITIES THAT ARE EVERYWHERE YOU LOOK IN TODAY'S UNDER-30 SET

fake-out, and we came of age in time to vote but it turned out to be the one when votes stopped counting, if they ever did."

There are most likely a great many things separating Taylor from this character — I wouldn't dare presume the author is similarly obsessed with the prisoner abuses at Abu Ghraib, or engaged in an S&M affair with another man's girlfriend, or (horrors) employed by Subway — but it's not a coincidence that the two men are part of the same grad class.

That's because at 27, Taylor possesses a world-view that is unmistakably (and inevitably described as) youthful — though in his case that isn't an insult. In fact, the stories in *Everything Here* are loaded with qualities that are everywhere you look in today's under-30 set, and which are coveted and puzzled over in equal measure by marketers, baby boomers, and the mass media alike: emotional urgency, tangled-to-the-point-of-inscrutable hipness, fluid conceptions of sexuality, and a crippling, unspoken fear of isolation. These are characters who suffer from chronic nostalgia. They're bright and disillusioned, but not quite ready to give up.

The best stories in the lot convey all of the above and more. In "Tetris,"

ily cat, Buckles, but the periphery is bursting with equally compelling ideas the narrator's uneasy slide into adulthood, his dissatisfied but forgiving girlfriend, and his more-than-forgiving interest in his 15-year-old cousin's underwear drawer. It's a stunner — and, at a mere 116 pages, a paragon of economy.

Sometimes Taylor can get too hung up on his narrative gimmicks, which tend to obscure the stories' larger missions. I don't know that I'll ever revisit, for example, the story about the angels and God locked in contract renewal negotiations, even after Satan shows up with a six-pack of beer ("Tetris" approaches this pitfall, too, but smartly cuts off after a few pages).

Over the course of these 15 tales, a few choice subjects keep recurring: DIY anarchists, pockets of Jewish-American exiles, covert sexual affairs, and the music of the Pixies and the Grateful Dead. Even the phrase that gives the collection its title pokes its head up more than once. The way these references align themselves in *Everything Here* is the *Best Thing Ever*, weaving in and out like notes in a blue-collar symphony, is a lot of fun to watch unfold. It'll be equally exciting to see what form they take in whatever Taylor produces next.



When Do You Call A Comic A Comic?

SEE'S COMIC EXPERT, KENTON SMITH, SHEDS SOME LIGHT ON THIS OFTEN MISUNDERSTOOD ART FORM

BY KENTON SMITH

In his *Something Like an Autobiography*, the great Japanese director Akira Kurosawa asked, what is cinema? He referenced a child's essay he'd read which compared the author's dog with various animals: "My dog resembles a bear; he also resembles a badger." And so on.

Until the closing, that is. "But since he's a dog, he most resembles a dog." So too with cinema, argued Kurosawa, which resembles numerous

for a radio program. Tough one, he said, but to begin with, he agreed: comics aren't simply cinema's static cousin. Indeed the juxtaposition of words and pictures mean comics "have it all over film" concerning density of information.

That's exactly the point Moore made in a 1988 interview, originally published in *Strange Things Are Happening*. And since the reader can flip the pages back and forth, one can unpack things at one's own pace — giving comics power to stimulate reflection. *Watchmen* overflows with recurring motifs — and their meanings become clear only by the conclusion: the same as true of cinematic

COMICS AREN'T SIMPLY CINEMA'S STATIC COUSIN.

other art forms, but is "in the final analysis, cinema.

So too with comics, one could say the medium evenly incorporates various elements of other media. Perhaps the most pervasive and enduring companion has been film — a comparison some have resisted. Alan Moore, author of *Watchmen* and *V for Vendetta*, said in a 2008 article in the *LA Times* that if comics are at best movies "that do not move."

So what does distinguish the comics medium? It's a question that's still very much in the process of being answered, both by scholars and active artists.

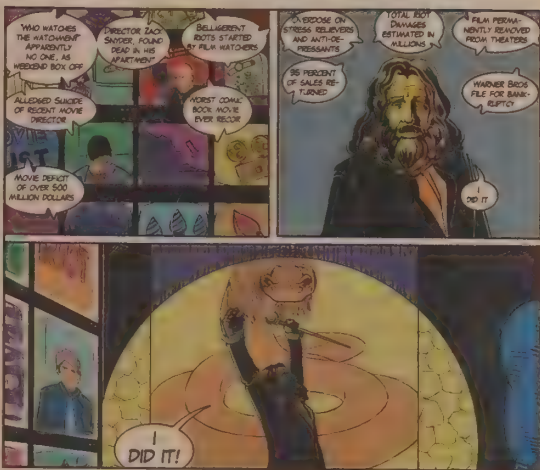
For my part, I threw the question up to an artist friend some time back

maestro Seth's recent *George Sprott*. But as this unique-to-comics any more? After the interview my friend called me at home, upon reflection, he said, can we now do the same sort of flipping back and forth: now with DVDs? It may be we've changed the way the way we watch movies.

So what's left?

My friend's final thought was: what distinguishes comics is that they are a drawn medium. That the image has no photographable reality, as with a motion picture image, is what makes the critical difference — an artist can bring any manner of graphic style to bear.

But wait, I thought after hanging up — could the same not be said of animation? Now where were we?



Alan Moore, as a proponent of comics as art, believes comics "have it all over film." PHOTO SUPPLIED

One aspect that remains distinct about comics brings us back to the motion picture comparison: yes, comics are static, but that's the point. Each panel can be considered a distinct moment in time.

What does this amount to in practice? Check out Bernie Kresten's classic *Master Race* — the famous

series of panels depicting a Nazi war criminal's fall on to a subway track isolates moments in time as slow motion never could. Among contemporary artists: Adrian Tomine or *Shortcomings* face is brilliant at packing the time and space between panels with tremendous psychological tension.

Is this all too academic? I think not. No matter the medium, chances are you'll get more out of it if you understand what exactly there is to take away — as well as the machinations involved in creating the end product. Comics, a misunderstood and underappreciated art form for decades, are particularly deserving of reflection.

DANCE • PREVIEW

Wang's World: Contemporary Dance With Balls



YES, THIS CHOREOGRAPHER'S LAST NAME IS WANG, AND HIS SHOW IS CALLED COCK-PIT. DISCUSS

COCK-PIT
Presented by the Brian Wau Theatre Company
Times Center 108 The Arts, March 5-6

BY ANDREW CAUL

At best, puberty for men is confusing and exciting, but mostly it's terrifying.

Fortunately for most of us, we have role models and health class to give us the lowdown on growing up.

However, that luxury wasn't afforded to Vancouver choreographer Wen Wei Wang who spent his adolescence in a Chinese boarding school for dance, sharing a room with four other boys.

"In my culture, at that time no one talked about sexuality, and no one talked about (how) your body changed as you grew up," Wang says

"We learned from each other and sometimes we felt that something was wrong when our bodies changed. We had our beads and moustaches come out and we didn't know how to do it. We would just pull out the hair and think something was wrong."

Here's the name of his dance show: *Cock Pit*.

Presented by the Brian Wau Theatre Company five dancers (four men and a woman) will take the stage to perform an abstract homage to the bewildering innocence of boys becoming men and the relationship they share.

Trapped in close quarters the men will span the volatile spectrum of swirling emotions that is intrinsically tied to pubescence as the mysterious and elusive female figure fits in and out of their realities, testing their imaginations and budding libidos.

"It's the image and the movement, they bounce, sometimes they fight, their bodies connect and sometimes

they touch," Wang says. "You feel something, but it's not about love as in the way adults love. It's innocent, it's friendship. It's sexuality in a way when we look back when we're the time when we don't know if it's sexual or not."

To convey these emotions Wang has incorporated a traditional Chinese hairpiece known as *ling* into the dancers' costumes.

Wang remembers first seeing the five-foot-long pheasant feathers during a performance by the Beijing Opera. Traditionally, when a character wears the feather they become "the creature-warlord" ready for a battle, or a fight — like a cockfight.

It sounds serious, but Wang says that this dance piece is light and funny, noting that the performance won the Tinto Alcan Performing Arts Award last year.

"People love it, they laugh out loud," Wang says. "A lot of people say it takes them back to their youth, being young with their friends."



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OPERA ON FILM - EVENT PROFILE

Chasing Carmen: The Met Opera In HD

**GET YOUR TICKETS EARLY
FOR LIVE MET OPERAS.
MAKING MOVIE MAGIC AT A
CINEPLEX NEAR YOU**

BY CHRISTINA STARR

On a brisk, chill-biting morning in mid-January, my 83-year-old mother and I set out to attend the New York Metropolitan Opera's production of *Carmen*. We weren't in New York and had no intention of going there. We also weren't going to the Jubilee Auditorium, where live opera is performed in Edmonton. We were on our way to the multi-screen Cineplex movie theatre at South Edmonton Common.

Yes, I said live opera. Since 2006, the Met Opera in New York has been broadcasting a selection of its Saturday matinees in high definition to movie theatres across North America and, more recently, internationally. The matinees in New York start promptly at 1:00pm. In the middle of an Edmonton winter that means you leave your cozy home not long after sunrise to be in your seat for the maestro's entrance at 11 a.m.

It's an odd time to see opera: historically associated with an evening out, black ties, ball gowns and proper theatre etiquette. It's also an odd venue. You're still allowed to buy popcorn and soft drinks and bring them into the theatre. You can squish your coat into the back of your chair or pile your winter gear on the seat beside



Carmen seduces opera fans around the world, especially in HD. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

away from the ticket counter. This might be a good time to mention that *Carmen* is possibly the most popular opera in the western repertoire.

The live HD transmission of *Carmen* was our highest viewing audience since we started in 2006, says Brent Ness, spokesperson for the Met. "About 240,000 people were watching worldwide and we expect that total to reach 320,000 with the encore transmission in March."

The hopeful line morphed into a saggish group of stunned opera philes, one of whom pressed the manager to check for tickets at West Edmonton Mall, the only other venue carrying the Met transmission. After receiving an affirmative, and with

might be tempted to put aside your highbrow etiquette and claw your way into a seat for one of those nune screenings.

"People call in the summer to ask when our subscription is the series 'going on sale,' says Sourtzis. "We start selling them in August even though the first Met broadcast isn't until October or November."

But it's more than the scarcity. The live transmissions are a little bit magical. There's something unusual about sitting in your comfy seat in your local movie theatre and looking directly, in real time, at the spectacle on stage at the Lincoln Center in New York City. And the Met is not the only institution that has understood this appeal.

"CARMEN SOLD OUT ALL OVER THE PLACE," SAYS GEORGIA SOURTZIS, MANAGER OF COMMUNICATIONS FOR CINEPLEX ENTERTAINMENT.

you. You can wear jeans or sneakers or an unravelling sweater and you can leave your toque on if you want to.

But the performance you'll see is exactly the same as all the tony people in Manhattan are watching, even the ones who paid \$275 for their seats (and probably \$5 for the coat check). In fact, it could be argued that your vantage is far superior — as the cameras will take you so close to the action, it's as if you're wandering at will among the players.

That's assuming you get a seat. On that morning in January, we arrived to find that *Carmen*, a torrid tale of love between a saucy gypsy vixen and an obsessed Spanish soldier composed by Georges Bizet in 1875, was sold out. Sold out. There are close to 300 seats in the theatres at Cineplex South Edmonton and, at net even 10:30 on a chilly Saturday morning, more than half an hour before show time and at \$20 a pop, every single one of them was spoken for, with a hopeful line still snaking

the warning that there was also a long line-up there the snap of his cell phone was like the crack of a starting pistol and my elderly mom and I were suddenly contestants in a kind of *Amazing Race*-type drama from South Edmonton Common, across the white-knuckled Whitemud freeway and through the maze of WEM to grab two of the hottest movie tickets in the city.

"*Carmen* sold out all over the place," says Georgia Sourtzis, manager of communication for Cineplex Entertainment. "But it's not that uncommon. A lot of theatres regularly show the opera broadcasts on multiple screens."

The Met transmissions are not every Saturday and not every opera is broadcast. "We started with six in the first year," Ness says, "and this season there are nine live transmissions out of 26 productions."

That may explain some of the demand. If you love opera and you're of the opinion that the Met is the pinnacle of the form, you certainly

"We've carried other live events like concerts and hockey, and plays from the National Theatre in London, U.K.," Sourtzis says. "Our very first broadcast was a WWE match about eight years ago."

So it may catch on, beyond the phenomenal success of the Met HD broadcasts. Perhaps in a few years it will be quite common — not to mention affordable, relative to the in-person price — to hold a season subscription to the Sydney Opera House, the Palais Royal in Paris or the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville.

Having bought tickets in advance would've saved my slowed-down mom and I an antic dash across the city in a race to snag seats for the beloved *Carmen*. We got them, and even from the only ones left in the neck-craining second row of the cinema, it was well worth the chase.

HD transmissions left in this season are: *Simon Boccanegra* by Verdi, *Hamlet* by Thomas and *Armida* by Rossini. *Carmen* will be re-broadcast on March 13.

**RICHARD GERE
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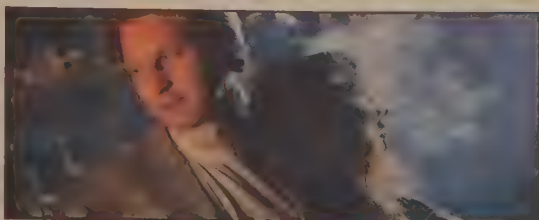
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BY BECKY HALLIDAY

My boyfriend and I paid just under \$40 to see *Avatar* \$15 each for tickets and \$9.56 for a small popcorn and bottled water. And I am not even counting the cost of dinner downtown.

Edmonton filmmaker Ben Babchishin wants to make it easier for you to view his newest short, *Honest, You Won't Get Hooked*. He has posted it on his production company's website for free viewing. The film boasts an all-local cast and crew featuring actors Murray Cullen, Linda Grass and Andy Northrup as well as notable names like designer Stanley Carroll and composer Thomas Brabec, a.k.a. Dr. Octavo.

The narrative follows 20-something George, who has been smoking since age 13, despite the govern-



Murray Cullen and Laura Ruschfeldt in *Honest, You Won't Get Hooked*. (PHOTO SUPPLIED)

ment forcing him outside for one little cigarette. Chicks just don't find yellow teeth attractive anymore, and he has developed nasty chest pains interspersed throughout are sketches — and one sacrilegious animated sequence — exploring smoking's erotic allure, the arrogance of asserting smokers' rights, and the exquisite pain of having quit... almost.

Although Babchishin, who quit smoking eight years ago, is "very anti-cigarette smoking," *Honest, You Won't Get Hooked* is decidedly

not propaganda. The comedy is the colour of that buildup on the diseased lungs on cigarette packages. "Only the most cynical will laugh out loud," Babchishin declares. "Everybody else is probably going to just be squirming uncomfortably.... I really got out of my way to pass people off. You gotta get some kind of reaction."

Although Babchishin has been working in film and television for 27 years, and has won four Alberta Film and Television Awards, this is his first

foray into free online distribution. It is a growing practice among independent filmmakers who can't afford extensive marketing campaigns — or who just want to make their films more accessible. Babchishin falls into both categories. It's very difficult being a filmmaker in Canada. There are just not as many opportunities as there are in other countries, and one of our biggest hindrances is being right next door to the US. We've rarely seen a Canadian film in a Canadian theatre."

Statistics confirm: Telefilm Canada's 2008-09 Annual Report marked the total local office intake in Canada for 2008 at \$919.6 million, while Canadian films took in just \$26.3 million (2.9 per cent of the market share). And this was before the economic downturn.

The online distribution method has created some notable successes, most recently that of American animator Nina Paley, who received critical acclaim and international distribution for her feature *Sita Sings the Blues* after posting it for free download.

While he would be thrilled to find similar success for now, Babchishin sees in the Internet an unprecedented chance to spark a conversation with, potentially, thousands of viewers. "[Filmmakers] can go to television [or] we can go straight to DVD, but we're not reaching enough people. I personally think that's the only way we're going to get better — by reaching people who will seek out Canadian film."

So if you want to support a host of local talent, go to www.honestfilm.com. Just try it once. Really.

METRO-REVIEWS

François Truffaut, The New Wave Master

METRO SHOWS OFF THE WORK OF FRANÇOIS TRUFFAUT, THE MASTER OF THE FRENCH NEW WAVE MOVEMENT

FOUR FILMS BY TRUFFAUT

Shoot The Piano Player ★★★★★

The Wild Child ★★★★★

Small Change ★★★★★

Metropolis Museum

Metropolis Cinema, Mar. 5-10

BY MICHAEL HINGSTON

François Truffaut broke onto the movie-making scene in the late 1950s as one of the trailblazers of the French New Wave, a movement that thumbed its nose at the rigidities of the existing studio system and celebrated a looser, more free-flowing style of cinema. In this new model, the director was king — free to goof around with the editing, or spontaneously riff on the original script like a jazz solo. The end product depended entirely on how he felt like shuffling the cards on that particular day.

But these guys weren't just stirring the pot for the hell of it. Many of the New Wavers, Truffaut included, began their careers as film critics for the influential magazine *Cahiers du cinéma*. So they knew the territory well: what they liked, and what they most certainly did not.

This deep familiarity with the history of movies informs much of the New Wave, and there may be no better example of this than 1960's *Shoot*



The children rule in *Small Change*. (PHOTO SUPPLIED)

the Piano Player. It's Truffaut's second feature film, though so fearless and bold as its pastiche-work that it could easily pass for the seasoned work of an old pro. Ostensibly the story of a cool, insatiable pianist on the run from a pair of goons, the film is also a reflection of Truffaut himself: a giddy, omnivorous director who can't help but lose himself in every rabbit-hole tangent he can think of.

Shoot the Piano Player clocks in at a mere 80 minutes, but it crams in more memorable images than most filmmakers can manage in an entire career. Indeed, this seems to be near the top of Truffaut's agenda, too — that would at least explain the way he hopscoches between styles, first from the ultra-noir opening se-

quence to an exuberant singalong in the bar where Charlie (Charles Aznavour) makes his living. This, the "Framboise" sequence, is the precise moment I realized I was in full-on swoon mode. It's deliciously good.

From there genres and influences continue to smash into one another like particles in a physics experiment, as Charlie dodges the gangsters (who can't stop bickering with one another) and shakes up with a swivel waitress who knows much more about his hidden past than she's letting on. Truffaut is truly firing on all cylinders here, it's intoxicating a film — and as loving a tribute to the transformative powers of moviemaking — as you will ever see.

By the time he made *The Wild Child* in 1970, Truffaut had eased off with the pyrotechnics, though his sense of adventure in terms of what projects to take on was still in full swing. Here the director makes his acting debut as a French scientist at the turn of the 19th century who becomes fascinated with a naked, feral, mute pre-teen boy, found in a forest, who appears to have spent his entire life in isolation. Truffaut decides to take on the boy as a special project, one that truly addresses some long-standing medical/philosophical conundrums. Can he be taught language so late in life? How much of our humanity is a product of socialization?

This is an easily recognizable type of historical film, and, strangely,

Truffaut doesn't do much to disrupt the formula. Admittedly, it's hard to imagine much nuance being injected into a storyline so ready-made for the saccharine, and in his defence, Truffaut does handle the material more tastefully than others might. But too much of *The Wild Child* feels automatic and broadly-sketched: there's a scene where the boy, fresh from the wild, literally gets scolded for not knowing which spoon to use at dinner.

Throughout his career Truffaut displayed an enduring and unequivocal sympathy with children. His feature debut, 1959's *The 400 Blows*, is a bleak assessment of absentee-parents and a kid who's all but forced into delinquency. With *Small Change*,

made 20 years later, Truffaut builds an altogether sunnier film around the antics of a small town's youth, its credits list five adult actors, and then a blanket credit to "two hundred children." It's an effective counterpoint to *400 Blows* — another free-floating, expertly observed triumph, this time with the poles reversed.

There's no pretense of a unified story here, only the various schemes and plots hatched by a squadron of adorable kids (many of whom were not trained actors). A girl uses her dad's megaphone to get the neighbours to send her dinner via a home-made pulley system and a picnic basket; two shy kids are cleverly tricked by the rest of their class into their first kiss, an unattended toddler follows his cat onto a ninth-floor balcony.

And the kids are adorable: they flirt, mug for attention, and laugh wildly, with their heads thrown back. Then, when no one's looking, they quietly puzzle over their parents and their own impending adulthood.

Truffaut's car for the language and rhythms of childhood is pitch perfect, and at the core of *Small Change* is its iron-clad sense of community. When an abusive parent is carried away by the police, a crowd of townspeople gathers to show its disdain by booing and pounding on the paddywagon's windows. The message is unmistakable: come after one of our kids, and we'll come after you.

Edmontonians Love Their Big Fat Jazz Hands



JAZZ STANDARDS DON BERNER

EDMONTON'S JAZZ SCENE'S WORTH TRUMPETING ABOUT. SO WHY ARE WE SO QUIETLY HUMBLE ABOUT IT?

In a city where one is continually bombarded with messages of Edmonton's search for an identity, there is a strong jazz culture here waiting to be recognized. The strikes against Edmonton's status as a musical hub are many, but even as many live music venues struggle, the jazz scene thrives.

Edmonton has legacies that go back further and garner greater acclaim on the world stage than many would believe, given our naturally Canadian inferiority complex. Many Edmontonians may not be aware that for decades Edmonton has long been a draw for jazz musicians in Western Canada. And why wouldn't it be?

Consider that the first jazz festival in Canada sprang up in Edmonton

in 1979, igniting a wave of very successful imitators.

Edmonton has multiple Juno award winners and nominees in various jazz categories such as Kent Sangster, whose *Obsessions* Octet released their new CD this week.

Grant MacEwan University (then College) offered one of Canada's earliest post-secondary jazz programs—the first in Western Canada—and has produced such notable contributors to the scene as John Stetch, who went on to become one of New York's premier jazz pianists.

The Yardbird Suite is internationally renowned for its friendly atmosphere, regularly sold-out shows and the professionalism of its staff. Notably, the entirety of the Yardbird staff is made up of volunteers, another aspect that Edmonton's community is known for. What is remarkable about "The Suite" is that its reputation as a prestigious venue is better recognized outside of Edmonton than within. The suite regularly hosts local and international artists such as saxophonist Lew Tabackin, who plays there later this month.

Several first-class restaurants double as jazz venues such as Jeffrey's Wine Bar, the Blue Pear and The Copperpot, whose Wednesday night



Kent Sangster's octet is a prime example of the great jazz offerings in our city. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

jazz series includes Dave Babcock's trio.

We're also one of the few cities anywhere that has one smooth jazz radio station (99.3 fm), four locally produced radio programs dedicated to the genre, and a world-class festival that regularly features global artists.

Edmonton is in a position that is both advantageous and precarious

W. teeter on the precipice of having a jazz scene that is the envy of other cities, and taking it for granted in a way that endangers it. It can be just as easy to forget why it is important to support the hidden gem of jazz culture that exists here; however, Edmonton has a wealth of world-class jazz musicians who have acted as ambassadors all over the globe. Perhaps most telling of this lineage

that exists in this city is that we have a senator who is a widely acclaimed jazz musician, Tommy Banks.

To be patriotic in the best sense of the word, go check out some live jazz in Edmonton and help support this city in keeping its unique identity. Edmonton's jazz scene is something we need to promote and preserve as ardently as any other major city would.

TOURING SHOW PREVIEW

Page To Stage: Chris Page On The Art Of Music



Turning the Page: Chris Page leaves his band and launches a solo album. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

CHRIS PAGE ■ WRITING MUSIC AND LYRICS, TOURING AND WHAT'S IN THAT MAGIC NOTEBOOK OF HIS

CHRIS PAGE

The Empress, Sat. March 6, 4 pm
The Blue Chair Cafe, Sat. March 6, 6 pm

BY STACEY LAWRENCE

Chris Page is no stranger to life on tour. He has crossed Canada more than a handful of times as the front man for The Stand GT and he's getting ready to do it all over again for his newest solo album, *A Date With A Snake Machine*. "When I was younger [touring] was a lot more time spent in a van and driving around," Page says. "Now I try to plan it so I can fly to places and do a few shows and do it quick as opposed to those long drives across the country."

So he's flying to Edmonton I caught Chris in the middle of his tour, getting ready for his Ottawa debut, and he's "super excited" for the bag record launch at home. When he talks about his album the poet in him is exposed right away. "The way I write is vignettes of past memories," he says. "I'm always hoping that people are going to listen

to the lyrics." And well they should. His lyrics are enlightening and profound, colored with the emotion of his voice, the imagery of his mind and lightness of his music. He could stand on a smoky stage without his guitar and recite his lyrics like poetry—and you would stay and listen and be pulled into whatever world he was remembering. They're that good. "I have two separate things going," says Chris on writing his music. "I have ideas which are words or titles or thoughts. I wouldn't necessarily say it's poetry. And I have bits of mu-

what I think the song is about, or thus is what the song means to me. And I'm like 'it's awesome, right' because it's not what it means to me but that's okay. That's what it's all about." And it's so much more than the insightful phrases scribbled in his book. Page flavours his songs with something uniquely his own. Maybe it's his roots in Montreal, or time spent on stage in Ottawa, or maybe it's his broad taste in music from punk to alt-country. Maybe it is whatever guitar he happens to be playing at

IT'S SO WEIRD WHEN YOU GET A GUITAR, SOMETIMES SONGS WANT TO COME OUT OF THEM

and then I start assembling the pieces to make a song. So I may accumulate the pieces over a long period of time. Some songs may take years even. The way I look at it is that I have to go out and play these songs and they need to mean something to me.

"Obviously for someone else listening to them, the song's going to mean something else. And that's great. That's the amazing part about art, I think, is your interpretation of it. I find it fun when people say this

the time. 'It's so weird when you get a guitar, sometimes songs want to come out of them.'

When you're listening you don't care what the combination is that creates a voice that moves you, subtlety and without pushing. The big question is, is there more music scribbled in that book of his?

"There's definitely more," he says. "I've already started working on songs for the next solo record."

Let's hope that means more tours to Edmonton.

Haiti Gets Help From Artists



WILDLIFE: FISH GRIMKOWSKY
THIS WEEK FISH GETS THE SKINNY ON HAITI FUNDRAISER, HOPE AT THE EPICENTRE, AND ENJOYS SOME GROWN-UP FUN

In the modern news cycle, the seven stages of loss usually happen in less than a couple weeks. *The New Yorker* is no longer packed with trendy stories about Haitian suffering—the death of J.D. Salinger bumped that off—and there's nary a whisper of what's going down on the ravaged island, except that it's pretty cheap to get to the Dominican. Even that sense of incandescent guilt people felt watching the lavish Olympics opening ceremonies is ■ but faded.

Of course, long-term help is what the Republic of Haiti needs and so a very good thing is going down Thursday here in Edmonton.

"I wanted to bring together my friends for the obvious reason that the situation in Haiti ■ dire and this ■ an opportunity for people like us, artists and designers who are not major celebrities, to give back ■ a beautiful way," says designer Carmen Douville, organizer of the silent auction Hope ■ the Epicentre. The benefit is bringing together a spectacular buffet of lavish design and art from across the nation: local jewelry to high end, boutique furniture sold in impregnable European shops you'll never even see here. And the list of local artists who chipped in ■

too long to print here. "The response from everyone has been really uplifting, having the artist call-out go from artist to artist from Toronto to New York to Vancouver the resources and support are out there, and we just want to say we care, too."

Douville rented Enterprise Square—the stopgap AGA space—and will of course have the usual assortment of local DJs and food donated by our best caterers. Some of the merchandise donated, lamps by the Olympic-medal designer Bocci for example, are worth more than most of us make in a month, or represent the thrill of Canadian imagination, like the swooping, accordion-based chairs of Vancouver's Molo Design.

THE SITUATION IN HAITI IS DIRE AND THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK IN A BEAUTIFUL WAY

Proceeds will go to Architecture for Humanity and Doctors Without Borders.

Starting ■ 7 p.m., 10230 Jasper Ave., entry is \$10 and the silent auction will kick off quickly. While one could certainly be cynical about shopping one's way to helping the forlorn, it certainly doesn't have to end there. It shouldn't. What's most important about this event is it reminds us Haiti's wounds still exist, and that you have the power ■ heal.

STUFF YOU MIGHT WANT

Overheard by an old friend on Robson Street after the celebratory madness, some ESPN dude saying, "Man, you'd think Canada just won a war or something."

WHAT TO DO AFTER

An amazing week of music just

passed us, from the double-header Corb Lund concerts, resplendent in everyman totemic, to John Henry singing "Nickels and Dimes" ■ the edge of Whyte Ave. My favourite gig was the Grown-Ups tape-release party, organized by Weir Canada's Aaron Levin, notable in its range of punk and indie. The headlining Sharp Ends have this scary East Bloc vibe thanks to singer Chris Zajko, like a Joy Division set where you know someone's going to be probably punched in the face.

Grown-Ups drummer Sara Hughes is my new favourite musician in town, married to guitarist Josiah Hughes, just a gleefully sweaty set with no distinction between audi-

ence and band. Krang was a little more Black Sabbath, purposeful guitar solos and the acrid stink of machine smoke scraping in a war-zone feel. Everyone was brilliant.

Levin ■ looking for volunteers for Wyrd Fest II, by the way, which coincides with the 8th Royal Bison in the beginning of May. Contact him at weirdcanada.com.

But what next? Jody Shenkarek with Fear and Worry at the Black Dog Saturday afternoon is one such distraction, worth it for the players alone: Tim Balash, Johnny Blerot, John Worschuck on bass. Free show, of course. "And yes we are gearing up to go into the studio ■ record a full length LP," Shenkarek adds. "We have a couple new songs and are planning on playing more this year. I don't know what else to say!"

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CD REVIEWS



JAY MALINOWSKI

Bright Lights & Bruises

(Vestron Records)

★★★★☆

Every band's frontman seems to have a solo singer-songwriter mode waiting for an opportunity to put out material that's been on the back burner for years, or maybe a lifetime. Perhaps it's the rockest touring life that brings it out, or perhaps it's just their true calling. Bedouin Soundtrain is known for everything: summer, great strumming vibes, bouncy reggae and inspired sing-a-longs. Bedouin singer Jay Malinowski's first foray into the solo world is a work distinctly different. *Bright Lights & Bruises* is a somber and piano-lingered expression. Malinowski's apparent respect for deep contemplation and everything wholeheartedly different from Bedouin's summer sound. And although there are some elements of Bedouin's distinctive sound here, for the most part, *Bright Lights & Bruises* is a stark contrast to Bedouin. Stand out tracks like "There is a Light," "Loving Hand" and the familiar "Santa Monica" make this release a nice reminder of why solo material can work well — and how devotion often shows off the true, stripped-down talents of an artist.

CURTIS WRIGHT



THE STANCE

I LEFT LOVE BEHIND A LONG TIME AGO

(San Francisco Records)

★★★★☆

If this record is any indication of musical things to come, 2010 could mark the light at the end of the tunnel. I've been waiting for. From its opening bluesy guitar lick to its low-key pop closer, *I Left Love Behind a Long Time Ago* brings back that wild, carefree holiday feel that rock 'n' roll left behind — a long time ago. It's music I get loose to, feel good to, with all the urgency and soul of *Exile on Main Street* and a touch of the Libertines to boot. Think T. Rex, Slade and Hello, and more recently, the Star Spangles, Sick Ricks and the Nice Boys, only steeped in the basements of Hallifax.

ROBIN SCHROFFEL



DAN BLACK

UN

(Mercury/Polygram)

★★★★☆

I would have to say my biggest problem with Dan Black, aside from his formulaic approach to appealing to hipsters, is the sheer monotony provided in his album. UN, although not a terrible album by my standard definition, offers aggressively little range, making it nearly unbearable to listen to. Maybe I'm asking too much in waiting an album to be interesting to listen to, but I think using a different drum beat or a more complex arrangement every now and then might make the songs pop out. If each song were to be presented individually, I would be more satisfied. They are catchy and they are groovy, however, they are all the same damn song. And there are 15 of them, clocking in at nearly an hour. Black has had some good success with his singles, perhaps he should just stick to them.

CRAIG PALMER



GEORGE WINSTON

Love Will Come: The Music of Vince Guaraldi Volume 2

(Nonesuch Records)

★★★★☆

I'll be honest: Lucy wasn't the only girl with a crush on Schroeder. Charlie Brown's piano playing pal, who can resist a guy with a toy piano? On *Love Will Come*, jazz pianist George Winston shares a second album of tunes by Vince Guaraldi, the real musical genius behind the Peanuts TV show. Guaraldi's smoky, lyrical melodies transport me to the outfield on a rainy Saturday afternoon or that peaceful patch of grass by Snoopy's doghouse. The "You're Expecting Charlie Brown Little Birdie" medley brings me back to days when all my problems could be solved by Lucy's five-cent psychiatry. But this album's not all Peanuts: some of the high points explore Guaraldi's other interests. Lunas and Pig Pen never visited South America, but shimmering chords on "Brasil" and easy rhythm on "Jambos" transport us there. I may have to switch my loyalties. Don't take it personally, Schroeder.

JEN HOYER



VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Contra

Is Records

★★★★☆

Someone told me they believe New York is where it's at for music these days. At the time I thought, "No shit, it always has been." But now, with the release of Vampire Weekend's *Contra*, I understand what he meant. New York has always spit out magnificent bands, but VW is of a much different calibre. *Contra* explores new areas of sound, and the presentation itself, without seeming contrived or forced. Every song seems to have had a natural growth from its initial idea, as if frontman Ezra Koenig thought, "I know what could serve this song better," as opposed to, "How can I make this more outlandish and starting?" Though the album may be less accessible than a traditional rock album, it does show positive signs for the well-being of musical evolution and proves not all sounds have been thought of already.

CRAIG PALMER

LISTEN · BY FISH GRIWKOWSKY

GHOSTKEEPER

GHOSTKEEPER

Like much of today's music, Ghostkeeper exists in the inexact middle of a sound as unmistakable as Arcade Fire or Major Lazer. Most popular indie bands seem obsessed with achieving leading them into... visibility, whispering down some hallway afraid of the presence of rhythm. Ghostkeeper is a breath of fresh air, the cross-legged phyness. Singing a little like the gummy-mouthed Ween, Shane Ghostkeeper seems born to throw wretched blues, stoner pow-wow and even a bit of inside-out Prairie funk bass into one tightly packed chamber. It sounds like sawdust and rocks, exploding metal in colorful, precise diagonals. You could even call it folk-metal, if times. Collectively, the band shows an understanding of texture all these genres, in masses seem to be missing. And yet it is the softness of Ghostkeeper, the cuddly acoustic guitar, the Make Up-like vocal twirls and just the very presence of Sarah Rowe as occasional lead, that gives the band such an intense range, like a dorama filling an entire bedroom. And even more important: it's about the pounding and ancient repetition, which should garnish Ghostkeeper a cultural grant.

anytime he asks. Because with his very subtly strutting out something older than Europeans alive in Alberta, without all that past sacred in my people's bullshit, as he shrugs at the fact he has to chain-saw down trees to make money just an amazing record, more accessible than the last, sacrificing nothing.

HEADBAND

MUSIC

If we're going to do a Calgary band, better do

one from here (even if they're retired). Actually, it's pretty hilarious Headband would put out such a solid piece of rock and roll and subsequently cease to exist as a unit. Close cousins to QOTSA, Pilestess and so forth.

It's all about the attitude, swooning down low from above, kicking you into the stratosphere, most then, whoa, all of a sudden the pilot's standing right behind you, yelp-whispering in your ear with three notes in one word, the drone still vibrating down.

Ian Martin did a great job bringing these songs in, a polished maturity, and the slowly burning oil of "Fish Garden" plays sweet off more rated bangers like "Little Shit." Courtney, Bobby, Jason and Hammer are all talented motherfuckers alive on the scene, so there's nothing to mourn.

★★★★☆

OLD SCHOOL

VAN MORRISON

ASTRAL WEEKS (1968)

Honestly, I've always hated farfetched Morrison. The man had his aches, but to such a birth for so many decades, and who doesn't fucking hate "Brown Eyed Girl," most of the singer himself. But lately I've come to appreciate the cadence of VM plus his willingness to sound like he's gagging on his own tongue. His lyrics are mysterious — "Cyprus Avenue" about a pedophile as Lester Bangs insisted? Doesn't matter, the tension's there. So are sharp lyrics. "I'm not being a stranger in this world." The band is amazing in a way that's lost to modern folk, orchestral without mainstream cook-wagging, waiting for the lifetime standing-O. The subtlety, it's everything here.

★★★★☆

★★★★☆





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SAVAGE (cont'd from p. 26)

Canada, and WHEREAS my Canadian readers patiently endure my rants about conservative American politicians (like last week's rant about New Hampshire state representative Nancy "Wiggle in Excrement" Eliott), and WHEREAS my American readers might assume that Canada—where gay marriage is legal, even has the health care, the boys are hot, and the girls are hotter—doesn't have any batshit-conservative politicians of its own, BE IT RESOLVED that I will make an effort to write about Canada's batshit-conservative politicians every once in a while.

No time like the present: I could write about your batshit-conservative prime minister, Stephen Harper, who's always prouging the shit out of my Parliament. (I don't know what prouging is exactly, but like the shit in French on breakfast-baked boxes, it sounds pretty fucking filthy.) But a better example of conservative batshitery would be Vic Toews. Canada's unofficial "Minister of Family Values," Member of Parliament Toews—surprised—doesn't like the guys because we're a threat to the family and the institution of marriage. Toews has described gay marriage ceremonies as satanic "Black Masses" and incited that adding eggs and lesbians to existing Canadian civil rights statutes would bring the "jackboot of fascism [down] on the necks of our people."

You know where this is going, right? It turned out that Toews—who once warned that gay marriage could lead to polygamy—was cheating on his wife of 25 years. After getting a much younger woman pregnant, Toews wound up getting divorced. Another marriage destroyed not by guys stomping around in fabulous jackboots, but by another straight "Christian" shitfuck politician slamming his dick into someone who isn't his wife.

Toews's affair became public two years ago, but the scandal didn't destroy him—he became minister of public safety this January—because the Canadian press sniffed that Toews's affair and divorce were private. Excuse me, Canadian-spies, but a politician who scares up votes attacking the private lives of others, a politician who insists that other people are out to destroy his marriage, can't be allowed to hide behind "my private business!" when it turns out that the only threat to the politician's marriage was the politician's own greasy cock.

Here's hoping that all straight folks everywhere one day realize that anti-gay ravers come in just two flavors: assholes who are externalizing their own internal struggles against homosexual desires (Ted Haggard, Larry Craig, Charlie Crist, Joseph Ratzinger, et al.) and assholes who are attempting to compensate for and/or draw attention away from their own moral shortcomings (David Vit-

ter, Mark Sanford, John Ensign, Vic Toews, et al.).

Toews is pronounced "taves," and it seems to me that it should be a word for something nasty. Get on it, Canada.

CONFIDENTIAL TO EVERYONE WHO ASKED: If the mother of the 13-year-old boy with the latex-glove fetish had written to me and not to Prudence—and she probably didn't write to me for a reason—I would've advised her to leave her son alone, told her that fetishes aren't mental illnesses, and suggested that her son might be feeling "horribly embarrassed and guilty" about his fetish because **HIS MOTHER IS HOUNDING HIM ABOUT IT**. And I would've told her that any wife or girlfriend who wouldn't indulge her son's kink—once he's an adult—wouldn't be worthy of his time or affections.

Find the Savage Lovecast (my weekly podcast) every Tuesday at thestranger.com/savage or mail@savagelove.net

ASTROLOGY • MAR. 4-10 • BY THE KID

CRUISIN' THE COSMOS

PISCES (FEB. 19–MARCH 20)

This week, you'll find yourself in the apparently predicament of being presented with paradoxical and prospect-contingency. In other words, it's a classic case of what Homer Simpson calls "crissilly." Take advantage of the problem posed poses by planets' some seeds in it to grow pretty roses!

ARIES (MARCH 21–APRIL 19)

They say the flame that burns twice as bright burns half as long. They also say knowledge is like fire: "cause one candle can light many without itself any. Well, unless that new-fangled rancher comes pretty quick. If you don't know how to switch candles, you'd best lay brimmin' your wick!

TAURUS (APRIL 20–MAY 20)

Lately you have been about as ambitious as a kitty cornered carefree in a catnip field. What the heck do you need motivation for when you've got all you could want and then even more? Well, you must muster some up from deep down inside 'cause you're missin' the vitamins and minerals catnip don't provide!

GEMINI (MAY 21–JUNE 20)

Wow! If you put your trust in your personal deity, you'll soon see why you started worshipping 'em in the first place. Now you may not win the lot, but the human race will be an entirely different story. If you've got the guts this week to go with your heart, you'll see your fair share of glory!

CANCER (JUNE 21–JULY 22)

It's an important week comin' up for y'all and you can't afford to stall or be too busy to hear destiny's call. Since after the weekend the moon's opposite your station, it's a good time for meditation in preparation for the choice you'll be faced. You may not know what the answer will be, but when it comes time to give one, you'll be ready!

LEO (JULY 23–AUG. 22)

Less love the devil's seat with damn good reason—they know how to handle their vehicle to their pleasure. Now, nobody likes a back-seat driver, but sometimes they do give good advice. Like "don't slam the brakes, while we're on black ice." When they pop up this week, don't let 'em until after you've taken a moment to listen!

VIRGO (AUG. 23–SEPT. 19)

All any concern-ing nation can attest, when you've got to wear that's more walk than before 'cause you've gotta clean up the mess you've left. As history shows, there's a few ways it can go. Will you rule with an iron fist or become a populist? Depend on your chosen direction, you can create either respect or frustration!

LIBRA (SEPT. 20–OCT. 22)

Still balancin' it out, lookin' at both sides, weighin' the pros and cons—just how long do you think this can go on? You can't sit on the fence forever. Sooner or later the scale's gotta tip, so it's time to loosen your self-control's grip. This week, open the choice, and the pedal to the metal and go flat out for broke!

SCORPIO (OCT. 23–NOV. 21)

Oh, these are the people in your neighbourhood. They'll do you some good, in your neighbourhood. Yeah, these are the people in your neighbourhood. They're the people that you meet when you're walkin' down the street. They'll hook you up with jobs that pay!

SAGITTARIUS (NOV. 22–DEC. 21)

Do not go gentle into that good night. For that matter, don't go gentle into anywhere the next little while. When you're wearin' a smile, who knows how long it will last so you might as well let it large and have a blast. This week, be like them wild men, catch and sing the sun in flight!

CAPRICORN (DEC. 22–JAN. 19)

You're playin' poker on a glass table in a chrome room with mirrors on the ceiling. The loser you are with your hand, the more cheater's appeal. Thank goodness you don't got to tell as well or that'd be bad news. This week, do what's best and keep your cards close to your chest!

AQUARIUS (JAN. 20–FEB. 18)

While you wait for Uranus and the moon to start their play, it's best if you stick to your day-to-day. 'Yknow, the duties that ain't always fun but, nevertheless, need to be done. Set up loose threads, miss your bed and do all your washin' so that when the buses start again, you're ready for mornin'!

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ing my lover, but it's the only out-let I've got.

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No Good Acronym

You were doing what you needed to do to stay sane and stay married before your husband's diagnosis, NGA, and you should continue to do whatever it takes to stay sane and stay married — for your own sake, for your husband's sake, for your kid's sake. If seeing your lover helps, I think you should continue to see your lover. But see him less often, NGA, and redouble your efforts to keep the affair secret.

You are less the spouse and lover now, and more the nurse and caretaker. In consideration of the good

everything you can to make your husband comfortable and make his death "good" — and that includes keeping your affair from him.

Realistically and logically, NGA, I think you won't be able to see as much of your lover over the next six months as you have over the last 18. And six months isn't that long to go without. But if you need to see your lover a few times in order to stay sane and stay married and get through this awful time, then you should see your lover — for your own sake, for your husband's sake, for your kid's sake.

I've been with my current boyfriend for a long time, he has refused to give me oral sex because he

the importance of oral for me, but he thinks I'm obsessing and says the act just grosses him out. I'm resenting this situation more and more. So much so that now I really don't feel like giving him oral sex. Any suggestions on how to improve this situation?

Needing Oral Tonight

Your situation will not improve, NOT, until you find yourself a boyfriend who isn't a fag. There may be a few straight boys out there who don't like to eat pussy, sad to say, but a straight boy who doesn't even like to look at pussy? Unless there's something very seriously wrong with your pussy's appearance—a web of scars from a wax-

Do to your boyfriend what my one and only girlfriend should've done to me: DTMA.

Just wanted to share a funny story with you. It's also, we think, a great example of being GGG. My ladyfriend generally requires more foreplay than I do, but on rare occasions we focus on me exclusively. Two nights ago, after three years together, we figured we'd give a high-school classic a try. I was going to get a handjob. I must've been temporarily transported back to my Little League days, because as she was contentedly pumping away, I asked if she could adjust her grip, saying, "Baby, could you choke up a little bit?"

"What," she said, the sweetest, most GGG look on her face, "you mean, like, cry?"

I really think she would've done it, too, if I hadn't laughed so hard I nearly fell off the bed.

Choked Up In Toronto

Thanks for sharing, CUIT, and now

WHEREAS you're writing from
Savage cont'd on p.25

IN CONSIDERATION OF THE GOOD YEARS YOU HAD TOGETHER AND WITH THE KNOWLEDGE THAT HIS UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESS COULD HAVE BEEN BEHIND HIS LACK OF INTEREST IN SEX, LET GO OF WHATEVER LINGERING RESENTMENTS YOU HAVE. DO EVERYTHING YOU CAN TO MAKE YOUR HUSBAND COMFORTABLE ...

Okay. Female, married 15 years, one young child. No sex with husband over last five years. Have tried therapy, talking, not talking, confrontation — you name it, Dan. I tried it. Lingerie, kink, porn. Seriously, everything. A year and a half ago, I got into a relationship with a married guy, a man who also wasn't getting any at home. Our agreement is basically this: no strings, no ties that could hurt our families, have as much fun as we can.

My husband just got diagnosed with late-stage cancer. He is dying. Six months. Leaving him is not an option. On some level, I feel horribly guilty about still see-

years you had together and with the knowledge that his undiagnosed illness could have been behind his lack of interest in sex, let go of whatever lingering resentments you have. Do

just plain doesn't like it, doesn't like the taste. He says he doesn't even like looking at my vagina. He does, however, like me to give him oral sex. I've tried explaining

ing gone horribly, horribly wrong; the Fox News logo tattooed on your public mound; the glowing face a parasitic twin where your clit should be — your boyfriend is a fag. NOT.

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Sherryll Sewepagaham gives a workshop in the drum teepee as a part of Winterlight's Aboriginal Camp in February.
PHOTO BY IAN JACKSON/EPIC PHOTOGRAPHY



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